We All Belong to One Ecosystem

> *"We all belong to one ecosystem. … Economic growth needs to be done in a responsible way that has minimal impacts on the environment."*

That statement, by 2014 Mandela Washington Fellow Bruce Ernest, sums up what YALI Network members expressed about conservation during a recent Facebook #YALIChat. Ernest, a business sustainability expert who volunteers at a wildlife and conservation society in Zambia, was joined during the three-day chat by Cindy-Lee Cloete, an environmental educator in South Africa, and Mantoa Moiloa, a park manager in Lesotho.

Comments focused on wildlife management, sustainable development and going "green" — what Ernest called the "triple bottom line of economic growth, social equity and environmental protection."

The discussion covered the importance of educating everyone about the need to conserve natural resources, governments' responsibility to form policies to protect the environment, and the relationship between tourism and conservation.

Endangered elephants enjoy a drink of water. © AP Images

Moiloa advises people to teach others to do their part to protect the environment. For example, people can learn to raise seedlings to replace felled trees. They can learn about foods that can be alternatives to meat hunted in the wild. And they can learn to regularly discard waste in proper containers instead of dropping it on the ground. "Let's not keep silent when we see our fellow human beings litter," she wrote.

Ernest said that communities can come together to create local laws aimed at protecting the environment and wildlife. Companies can do more to be green by adopting efficient production methods and by adhering to local environmental laws and regulations. "Future companies will have no choice but to go green and act in a responsible way," he wrote.

Conservation and tourism

Henok Hiruy said tourist companies that appeal to travelers concerned about the environment are using a good business model. "By focusing on social issue[s], they tend to connect people with similar causes," he said. He and others asked how ecotourism can better benefit local communities.

In response, Chikondi Thole said that people who live near tourist attractions can "creatively sway attention" and bargain with tour operators to get deals that will provide them with more of the tourist dollars.

Who is responsible?

Herbert Nyirenda questioned who is ultimately responsible for looking after the environment. "Do natural systems belong to the public or do they belong to corporate and private interests?" he asked.

The systems “belong to the public,” Cloete answered. She added that government and the private sector, however, have responsibility to manage the systems “for the benefit of all.”

“If we make green our environment, we can contribute to the world a balanced climate and clean air,” wrote Weldeyesus Gebrewahid.

Leadership: A Personal Reflection on Key Concepts

A guest post from Sadhana Hall, an instructor for the YALI Network Online Courses, including lessons on “Networking to Get Ahead,” “Creating and Managing a Team“ and “Setting and Achieving Goals.”

I am fortunate to reflect on leadership and management concepts regularly, but not because these ideas are necessarily “new.” Many leadership concepts may be simple, but they are not just “common sense”; if that were the case, why don’t we see them being practiced more frequently? In my experience, I’ve found that great leadership requires intentional reflection on key concepts; here are a few that are important to me.

Effective management and leadership begins with **being self-aware**. This simply means that you need to work hard to intimately understand your strengths and weaknesses, model ways in which your values are congruent with your behavior, and develop a culture of respect for yourself and for others on your team. Recently, a new employee said to me: “Although I already had a strong sense of my core values before joining this organization, working here has pushed me to practice a higher level of professionalism. Our organization’s culture doesn’t just teach leadership to our students, but expects faculty and staff to model what leadership actually looks like on a daily basis. We are responsible for an array of excellent courses, effective programs, and skill-building events, but the most personally rewarding aspect of my work is participating in an internal culture that is congruent with our external message.” Explicit and implicit in this employee’s observation is the way in which our team practices shared management and leadership with awareness and authenticity.

Consider also what **integrity** means to you as a manager or a leader and why it matters. Integrity has been defined and described in many ways, but there is one idea that has stuck with me: A person’s integrity is a matter of the value of his or her word, nothing more and nothing less. If you keep your word for every task, large or small, people will naturally trust you with more complex responsibilities. Responsibility and trust create credibility, which then makes the conditions ripe for leading people towards achieving common goals. This is how your organization and your role within it can grow. So consider developing a habit of keeping your word — to yourself and to others. I know from personal experience that this is not an easy thing to do all the time. If you break your word — to yourself or to another person — apologize and figure out a way to fix the problem you might have created by breaking your word.

Finally, as a leader, pay attention to **self-care**. Taking care of your team starts with taking care of yourself. Understand your limits and what you can reasonably accomplish in a finite period of time. Identify tasks only you can accomplish and delegate other tasks in ways that will engage your team members and encourage their development.

These are my reflections on self-awareness, integrity, and self-care. What do these concepts mean to you?

‘Join Us to Conserve’

Mount Cameroon National Park intern Cynthia Sama explains the basics of conservation to a park visitor. Courtesy of Cynthia Sama

Thousands of tourists visit Mount Cameroon every year, leaving behind crumpled food wrappers, plastic bags, beverage cans and other nondegradable trash that blemishes the sides of the 4,040-meter volcano.

Their garbage is more than an eyesore. It is a threat to nearby communities who look to the mountain’s forest as a source of food, fuel and medicine and as a place of worship.

It is also a drag on what could be a thriving and sustainable ecotourism industry.

YALI Network member and Mount Cameroon National Park intern Cynthia Sama works with a team to clear up the problem. “The beautiful nature inspired me to choose this field,” she says. “I love to see people very happy, living in harmony with nature and themselves.”

Sama’s team helps visitors and their guides understand that conserving forest biodiversity and wildlife is essential to enjoying the mountain now and in the future. It encourages tour operators to do their part by picking up trash from trails and disposing of it properly.

The government helps in other ways. It identifies “high-value” ecosystems and employs “eco-guards” and foresters to protect them. It has adopted laws and policies and provides funds to sustainably manage the country’s natural resources and wildlife. And it sponsors training for people in mountain communities in how to cultivate cassava, plantain and yam, and how to raise bees.

Bolstering these efforts are environmental groups including Green Cameroon and ICENECDEV, both based in Sama’s hometown of Buea. Working with local communities, these groups provide environmental education and have introduced agriculture, water and sanitation, and health projects to improve residents’ lives in ways that are good for the environment.

Sama, 25, hopes that businesses will join the nonprofits. First, business owners can financially support conservation awareness campaigns. Then, they can start ventures in areas like producing products made of natural materials, opening trash sorting and recycling plants, starting tree seedling nurseries, and even setting up nature-themed amusement parks, she says.

She believes that businesses that implement these practices will grow by attracting "environmentally friendly customers, especially foreigners." Those businesses also can serve as examples for other businesses in how to promote conservation and generate jobs, she adds.

Long-term, Sama wants "every single Cameroonian to be able to know what conservation is all about" and not to do things like "dumping wastewater on the floor" instead of flushing it into a sewage receptacle.

Sama also wants YALI Network members to appreciate the flora and fauna around them. "Nature is life," she says.

She urges members to "try as much as possible to keep nature clean and friendly for yourself and for your next generations. Obey the environmental rules and regulations of any country."

"Join us to conserve the ecosystem," she says.

Join #YALIGoesGreen this month. Learn how to get involved at yali.state.gov/climate

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Essential Resources for Growing Your Ecotourism Business

The travel and tourism industry continues to grow, offering new business opportunities. (rcrhee/Wikimedia Commons)

Despite occasional dips in annual growth, travel and tourism has flourished over the last decade, and the industry is expected to take back its role in driving global growth, creating jobs and alleviating poverty. In fact, the World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that 3.8 million jobs could be created by the tourism industry in sub-Saharan Africa by 2023. If you are ready to enhance your travel and tourism project — or to jump into this exciting industry — check out these resources.

Developing your plan. Building a new business is hard work. The U.S. Small Business Administration reports that 50 percent of new businesses disappear by the fifth year of operation. New businesses fail for a variety of reasons, from lack of capital to poor management. Yet there is one step that helps to address many of these issues, which is to develop a comprehensive business plan. Get started with USAID's toolkit Sustainable Tourism Enterprise Development: A Business Planning Approach [PDF - 3 MB].

Telling your story. People travel for a variety of reasons: to escape, explore, understand and participate. But at the core of the experience lies the destination — the place that hands something to the traveler to keep forever and share with others. Whether your destination is rural or urban, rustic or hip, you need strategies to best tell your destination's unique story. Begin with USAID's workbook Tourism Destination Management: Achieving Sustainable and Competitive Results [PDF - 4 MB].

Figuring out what makes your destination unique can help attract tourists — and grow your business. (Chris 73/Wikimedia Commons)

Managing your people. Because people are essential to the travel and tourism industry, managing them well is essential to success. To help managers in the travel and tourism industry assess, design, implement and evaluate their workforce development plans, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has created this Guide to Assessing and Designing Tourism Workforce Development Programs [PDF - 9 MB].

Powering your business. Rural tourism is a rapidly growing sector of the global tourism industry. Since rural tourism operations are often in remote locations, ensuring a reliable supply of energy can be a special challenge. To help your tourism venture plan for reliable energy, read USAID's guide to Electrification and Efficiency Options for Rural Tourism Facilities [PDF - 1 MB].

If you are hungry for more tourism-related resources, consider enrolling in USAID's free Sustainable Tourism Online Learning Program.

Lessons Learned in Public Land Management

Crested Pool is just one of the thermal features that earned Yellowstone its national park distinction in 1872. (Neal Herbert/flickr)

Singled out for its unique thermal landscape, Yellowstone became the world's first national park in 1872. Since then, the U.S. government's approach to public land management has evolved, influenced by science and public opinion. National Park Service officials Patrick Gregerson and John Dennis offer lessons learned to others interested in public land management.

Identify unique attributes. What are the scenes, sounds, smells and stories that separate this land from other tracts? For Yellowstone, it is the park's position on one of the world's largest calderas and its possession of two-thirds of the world's geysers.

Consider cultural value. "I've really become sensitive to the park's cultural resources, and to

seeing that they are of equal value to the natural resources," said Dennis, who began as a plant biologist. Although valued for its natural resources, Yellowstone holds spiritual value among Native American tribes and witnessed storied westward expansion by early settlers.

Make a plan. "Planning provides a logical, trackable rationale for decisionmaking," Gregerson said. A good plan answers questions like these: What is this park's purpose? What makes it significant? What are its fundamental resources and values?

Involve everyone. "All citizens have a role in planning," Gregerson said. The park service asks for input from state, local and tribal governments, nonprofit organizations and private industry whenever it is considering any action that might have an environmental impact. It records all discussions publicly and allows the public to comment throughout the process.

Keep an open mind. The U.S. Forest Service, for example, wanted to use a herbicide in Pacific Northwest forests to encourage conifer growth. Concerned about toxicity, a coalition of planters, scientists and residents worked with the agency to develop a plan that did not rely on herbicide for tree growth. That's typical. Gregerson said agencies tweak most plans before implementing.

Look for mitigating measures. Agencies request a "mitigating measure" when environmental harm is done or public access lost. If the Bureau of Land Management extracts minerals, the park service could ask its sister agency (both are under the U.S. Department of the Interior) to offset the harm done by buying adjacent, equivalent — down to the number of trees — land.

Seek tourism and preservation. Managing parks so people can enjoy them is a park service mandate. "Many people have argued there is conflict between preservation and enjoyment," Dennis said. "I've come to realize that it's not a conflict — both are absolutely necessary to meet the purpose of the parks."

In Defense of Wildlife

Ivory seized from the illegal wildlife trade (Thinkstock)

At a laboratory in Ashland, Oregon, carved chalices, dagger handles and ornate jewelry await inspection. They arrive in packages sealed with tamper-proof red tape, instead of the molten wax of days gone by. They are dispersed down a long white corridor to 14 scientists.

The skilled teams try to uncover the narrative of killings, determining who the victims were, how they died, where, when and at whose hands — only they do it with fur, feathers, tusks and claws, some of which have become objects of art.

The wildlife trade is one of the world's oldest forms of currency, but today's wildlife poaching and

trafficking have expanded into a more serious business. One of the most lucrative of transnational crimes, it generates revenues conservatively estimated as high as $19 billion a year. Countless species have been hunted to the brink of extinction, from turtles to tigers. Populations are further imperiled by habitat loss and ecosystem damage stemming from illegal logging and development pressures.

A 2014 global operation spanning 28 countries and supported by the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has resulted in more than 400 arrests of wildlife criminals and 350 major wildlife seizures across Africa and Asia.

But efforts to prosecute violators were hindered before the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Forensics Laboratory opened in Oregon. Since then, the lab has been providing analytical services and expert witness testimony so that people illegally preying on wildlife face fines and jail time.

Said Ken Goddard, director of the lab: “You’re there to tell the truth and what your science has found. Have you been able to link the suspect, victim and crime scene with the physical evidence?”

Roughly 150,000 pieces of evidence are sent to the lab each year. Its earliest cases involved big-game kills — typically one-hunter, one-animal cases. The lab receives evidence that suggests an escalating demand for wildlife parts: rhino horn, which is more valuable per gram than gold, elephant ivory and bear gall bladders.

But how do scientists know if an ivory bracelet is from an elephant, narwhal, mammoth or hippopotamus? The lab’s colony of flesh-eating beetles, which skeletonize bones for identification, won’t always suffice. Nor will its three-dimensional scans of valuable museum specimens meant to compare skulls and other bones.

But one state-of-the-art instrument available in the lab reveals an item’s chemical components, helping scientists identify species. Another can beam an ultraviolet laser on a speck of blood to detect hemoglobin molecules, which have characteristics particular to each species.

Beyond the lab, an arsenal of innovative technology is targeting illegal wildlife trafficking. “There are 13 million people in southern Africa directly employed in the safari business and probably twice as many in indirect roles,” said Maryland-based computer scientist Tom Snitch. “The bottom line is, if there are no animals, all these jobs will be lost.” Snitch mobilizes rangers to stop poachers with algorithms — that is, drones programmed with his calculations. Historical data on poaching patterns, wildlife movement, vegetation and weather are all a part of the math.

At the lab, Goddard and his team have hosted scientists from around the country. A visit in 2014 by Asis Perez, director of the Philippines’ Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, opened the door to collaboration with that country’s wildlife investigators. Goddard showed Perez an ivory tusk dyed blue to demonstrate how fingerprints are pulled up. The scientists found that the tusks were from elephants in southern Africa. The bullet impact suggested the herds had been shot from above, probably from a helicopter. The other three tons of ivory were sent to Denver to be crushed.

‘Let’s All Go Green’

Mavis Nduchwa enjoys one of her “wow moments” of appreciating the view in the Makgadikgadi salt pans. A meerkat, common in the deserts of Botswana, perches on her knee. (Courtesy of Mavis Nduchwa)

One evening in Botswana’s Okavango Delta, YALI Network member Mavis Nduchwa attended a dinner with the late South African conservation pioneer Ian Player. The founder of the Wilderness Foundation in South Africa and the United Kingdom, and of the WILD Foundation in the United States, “made me realize the important role I can play in helping to conserve nature,” Nduchwa recalls.

Now a manager of Planet Baobab, a travel lodge at the edge of Botswana’s Makgadikgadi salt pans southeast of the delta, Nduchwa helps guests appreciate and protect their surroundings.

> *“I cannot imagine my life without wildlife,”*

she says. Linking conservation with her livelihood, she stresses that her park job has allowed her to build a house and to send her nieces and nephews to school.

The Makgadikgadi pans, in the middle of northeastern Botswana’s dry savanna, are the remains of an enormous lake that once covered an area larger than Switzerland. The area makes up one of the largest salt flats in the world. During the harsh dry season, the salty desert has little plant life. But following the rainy season, the pans become a critical habitat for migrating animals, including wildebeest, zebra, white pelicans and greater flamingos.

While the government of Botswana is addressing threats to the environment like deforestation, erosion, and illegal hunting, Nduchwa feels more can be done. She suggests training educators about conservation so they can teach the public about what everyone can do to use natural resources carefully. She says conservation outreach to people who live in rural areas and don’t have access to radio messaging is particularly needed.

“People should understand that it is our responsibility to look after our environment,” Nduchwa believes. “They should understand why they should not walk past a plastic bag or a can in the wild. With the right knowledge of the damage that does to the environment, individuals can do a lot. We need to empower them with knowledge.”

Mavis Nduchwa takes a break from managing the Planet Baobab lodge in

Botswana's Makgadikgadi salt pans.(Mavis Nduchwa)

Nduchwa is doing her own part. She volunteers at local schools, helping students understand "the importance of looking after our environment." And she teaches local women about farming methods that are safe for the environment, like using crop stems to feed pigs and chicken manure instead of chemicals to fertilize gardens.

Nduchwa adds that businesses, too, can partner with communities to help conserve natural resources and protect wildlife. Planet Baobab, for example, has adopted conservation practices like having guests and employees refill their plastic water bottles instead of disposing of them when they are empty.

Nduchwa says that using environment-friendly practices can be good for businesses' bottom lines. "More companies and individuals would want to associate themselves with such businesses," she notes, adding that she prefers to buy from businesses that sell products made from recycled materials like paper and plastic.

That recycling also generates jobs, she notes, pointing to the women weavers who make and sell hats, mats and even greeting cards out of recycled materials.

"I always like to see a clean environment around us," Nduchwa says, adding that her village won an award for being the country's "most clean village."

Nduchwa suggests that teachers can get young people involved in conservation by organizing them to collect discarded cans and bottles for recycling or for use in their school science projects. "Make the experience as fun as possible," she suggests.

"Let's teach our kids to conserve while they are still young," she says. "Let's all go green."

Join #YALIGoesGreen this month. Learn how to get involved at yali.state.gov/climate

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Conservation: Good for the Economy, Good for the Future

Mantoa Moiloa (Courtesy of Mantoa Moiloa)

Up in the highest nature reserve in Africa accessible by motor vehicle, Mantoa Moiloa teaches people how to take care of the land and the animals and plants living on it.

"My passion for my country influenced my decision in a career," says the 33-year-old Lesotho park

manager and 2014 Mandela Washington Fellow. “I want to protect the beauty of the Mountain Kingdom for future generations.”

Moiloa manages the Bokong Nature Reserve, one of the Lesotho Northern Parks in the southern African country. It’s a position that has helped her understand that conservation and business have close ties. Lesotho “boasts” of its areas’ natural beauty, she exclaims. “We are bound to conserve our natural environment so as to keep our tourism business going,” she adds.

Moiloa holds a bachelor’s degree in technology in ecotourism management from Tshwane University of Technology. She recently transferred to Bokong from the Liphofung Cave cultural and historical site nearby.

The conservationist works on many fronts to protect her country’s natural resources. She helps Lesotho’s community conservation groups identify and approve infrastructure restoration projects. She is involved with conservation awareness campaigns and helps law enforcement officers in efforts to stop illegal wildlife poaching.

While most of Lesotho’s most beautiful but fragile lands are protected by the government, Moiloa would like to see public officials establish an independent body to manage those areas and the country’s budding ecotourism industry. That body could reach out to international partners to help it identify other areas in the country deserving of national protection and conduct environmental impact assessments of proposed development projects, she says. It also could develop local and international marketing campaigns to entice visitors to Lesotho, touting the country’s geography and wildlife.

Moiloa says ecotourism can benefit Lesotho’s citizens economically. Job-creating businesses include those that sell handicrafts made by people living in the area; guide horseback-riding, hiking and bicycling tours to remote areas; offer cultural performances; and provide meals and overnight accommodations at lodges, in homes and at camps.

A lion rests in a protected park area of
Lesotho. (Courtesy of Mantoa Moiloa)

Moiloa says environmentally friendly businesses can help make conservation a nationwide behavior, encouraging employees to use at home the same resource-saving practices they use at work. Such businesses “help the sustainable use of natural resources, conserving them for the next generation,” she says.

Moiloa says one way people can protect their natural surroundings is to adopt environmentally friendly lifestyles. That means doing things like recycling paper and glass products, reusing shopping bags, composting organic matter for garden fertilizer, using only the amount of water needed, not discharging pollutants into the air or water, and hunting and fishing legally.

So far, Moiloa, originally from Botha-Bothe, says that “only people in the communities near natural protected areas are aware of environmentally friendly ways of living.”

Long-term, Moiloa hopes that all Lesotho schools will teach students about the environment and conservation — lessons that are easily learned at a young age, she notes.

She urges other YALI Network members to do their part for conservation by pledging to plant at least one tree a year. “Let’s use our resources sustainably,” she implores. “The legacy of your grandchildren is in your hands.”

Our Heritage, Our Charge

by: Resson Kantai Duff, projects officer with Save the Elephants

A caravan of elephants crosses a road in the Masai Mara National Reserve. (Matt Biddulph/flickr)

The complexity of the African continent and its diverse environment cannot be described succinctly. Too many times however, the “African” environment has been boxed into one contiguous land with wide-open plains, wet forests and desert-scapes, and one people living in this vast landscape, teeming with wildlife. Each African country has a rich and unique biodiversity, which, in many cases, is inextricably linked to our cultures. We have every reason to be proud. As young African leaders, we must recognize that with this amazing heritage comes great responsibility to protect, to nurture, and to define the narrative that underpins that nature. Put simply, it is up to us to decide where nature and conservation fit in at this time of “Africa rising.”

In many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, wildlife and the environment have languished at the bottom of the national agenda. Understaffed and underfunded government units were expected to oversee it all. But these units often alienated people from their ancestral resources. As a young girl growing up in Kenya, I often heard people use the phrase “wanyama wa serikali” – the government’s wildlife. In Kenya, it is only in recent years that the narrative of community conservation – where communities are empowered to manage and reap benefits from wildlife – is taking root in pastoral lands. This is a development I have watched and celebrated, as both an urban Maasai and an academic conservationist.

Still, with such an entrenched belief that the environment is not their responsibility, people’s attitudes toward wildlife are slow to evolve, especially in agricultural lands where human-wildlife conflict is an issue. These negative attitudes have permeated policymaking. And as development takes center stage, railways, roads, pipelines, mines and human habitation eat away space for wildlife.

Resson Kantai Duff has turned her passion for wildlife conservation into a position with the Save the Elephants

organization. (Sean Dundas)

Taking a step back, we have to ask: Why should wildlife take a more prominent role? Is there reason to celebrate them? Yes! Firstly, Africa is the world's richest continent in terms of natural resources, and the environment has given back to the continent in immeasurable ecosystem services. Ecological processes such as pollination, climate control, and water purification are essential for life, not to mention the baseline economic activities on which many of our economies depend. The wildlife themselves are great facilitators of some of these processes, pollinating, breaking down waste and controlling pests. Elephants in equatorial forests, for example, disperse seeds no other agent can. Removing them from the ecosystem would cause the decline of important tree species and lead to a trophic cascade, exacerbating climate change.

For tourist destinations like Kenya and Tanzania, wildlife are of defining importance. If for one reason or another tourists cannot see wildlife, wildlife tourism ceases to be. This affects everyone from the communities who rely on tourism to the managers in the hotels and the vegetable sellers on the streets. For me personally, it has been painful to watch friends employed in the lodges and hotels around our research camp being laid off as our tourism slump continues.

Yet it has taken a wildlife crime wave of catastrophic proportions to wake us up to wildlife's value. Elephants, rhinos, pangolins and big cats are just some of the species under threat from the illegal wildlife trade. They are a recent whispering memory.

Perhaps it is the world's collective ownership of African megafauna that is crowding out homegrown solutions to these problems. This global ownership has invited a slew of internationally crafted solutions for the problems we face. But with a plethora of African scientists, advocates and policymakers, and with vibrant youth to take up these positions, we can work for the betterment of our environment, and our future.

So far, my part in the story has been small, but I take great pride in it. As I concentrate on understanding the intricacies of the ivory trade, I am beginning to see how crucial it is for us to tackle our own problems. Everyone must play their part. It will take brave leaders to root out the corruption that allows our wildlife to leave our continent in proverbial body bags. It will take young policymakers to ensure the environment is considered in tandem with development. It will take creative inventors to think up innovative solutions to human wildlife conflict. It will take communities and landowners to secure and respect wildlife on their properties. It will take diplomats and campaigners to build bridges of awareness with wildlife consumer countries. It will take concerned urbanites and civil society groups to pressure governments to keep wildlife conservation on the national agenda. And it will take everyone to build a collective sense of pride and ownership for our wildlife.

No one else will suffer this loss more than the youth of Africa. No one else has so much to gain.

Resson Kantai Duff is projects officer with Save the Elephants, a leading elephant research and conservation organization headquartered in Kenya. An urban Maasai and academic conservationist, Kantai Duff is passionate about Africa's environmental heritage and committed to its preservation.

Nine Careers in Wildlife Conservation

A baby hyena rests in South Africa.

Whether it is raising awareness among family and friends or volunteering at a local sanctuary, everyone can be an advocate for wildlife conservation. If you want to elevate your advocacy into a career, consider one of these nine options:

Wildlife Biologist

If you are passionate about wildlife and skilled in science, a career as a biologist might be for you. Wildlife biologists study animals and their habitats. They observe their physical characteristics and behaviors. They watch how they interact with each other and their ecosystem. They use this information to prepare reports on wildlife management, conservation, habitat restoration and natural resource management, among other topics. They can work outdoors, in laboratories or offices, and often collaborate with other professionals on this list.

Conservationist

Conservationists identify lands worthy of conservation. Whether working for a nonprofit organization or a national government, conservationists research the natural and cultural significance of certain lands, then develop recommendations and, if necessary, acquisition strategies. This requires that conservationists work with wildlife biologists, land owners and real estate professionals on a regular basis.

Wildlife biologists, veterinarians and rehabilitators can work with exotic animals, domestic animals or livestock, such as the cows above.

Health Professional

Both wildlife veterinarians and rehabilitators look after the health of animals. Wildlife veterinarians are licensed to sedate, examine and vaccinate wild animals, among other responsibilities. These veterinarians often work closely with wildlife rehabilitators, who provide medical support to injured, sick or orphaned animals with the hope of returning these animals to the wild. Both veterinarians and rehabilitators can work for commercial and private game reserves as well as livestock farms and national parks.

Park Ranger

Whether serving a national park or a private facility, park rangers protect the parks and ensure the safety of visitors. Park rangers greet visitors, explain the facilities available for public use and inform them of the park's natural and cultural history. Park rangers help implement plans aimed at

managing wildlife, restoring vegetation and conserving water. To keep others informed of the park's daily activities, park rangers also prepare reports on everything from the amount of fees collected to the type of game spotted.

Park rangers, safari guides, game wardens and wildlife law enforcement officers all have a role to play in conserving local wildlife.

Law Enforcement Professional

If you have an interest in law enforcement and wildlife, you have several options. Game wardens, for example, are responsible for enforcing the rules of their game park. This includes rules related to hunting and poaching. Wildlife law enforcement officers, on the other hand, have a broader perspective. They are responsible for enforcing national laws and international agreements. They often work with game wardens to provide guidance on implementing national and international rules.

Policy Advocate

Policy advocates seek to influence local, national and international legislators to pass laws that promote wildlife conservation. A policy advocate working for a game park, for example, might work with game park management to establish consensus on what is best for the park and its wildlife. With this consensus established, the policy advocate would then work with legislators to ensure that the laws they pass align with this consensus.

Curators and photographers play an important role in conservation by raising awareness and inspiring action among people who may never see these animals in the wild.

Exhibit Curator

Exhibit curators tell the story of wildlife and the community it lives in. To do so, they develop everything from pamphlets and magazines to short videos and interactive plays. Each piece is designed to educate the public and raise awareness about the wildlife and its environment. This job requires collaborating with writers and designers to create these pieces while working with biologists and other experts to ensure the information is accurate and accessible.

Wildlife Photographer

If you enjoy travel, wildlife and photography, this might be the career for you. As the name implies, wildlife photographers capture photographs and videos of wild animals. Their work can be scientific, promotional or educational. For example, they can help create a photographic database of nearby wildlife for identification purposes. They can place their photography in promotional materials to generate buzz for a local wildlife sanctuary. Or, perhaps most well known, they can submit their photography to major publications to raise awareness of local wildlife and the need to conserve it.

Fundraiser

The good work of the wildlife biologist and the exhibit curator would be lost if it were not for the fundraiser. Fundraisers secure financial support from private donors to ensure game parks, wildlife sanctuaries and other wildlife habitats can prosper. Their work includes maintaining relationships with existing donors, developing relationships with potential donors and finding new ways their organizations can raise money.